

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2595

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, February 28, 2008

Title: An act relating to veterans' relief.

Brief Description: Including national guard members in county veterans' assistance programs.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Government & Tribal Affairs (originally sponsored by Representatives Rolfes, Linville, Moeller, Appleton, Ormsby, VanDeWege, Seaquist, Hurst, Sells, Haigh, Morrell, Campbell, Upthegrove, Lias, Chase, Barlow, Green and Kelley).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/14/08, 94-0.

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/28/08 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; Benton, Kline, McDermott and Pridemore.

Staff: Cindy Calderon (786-7784)

Background: Washington State law requires every county to administer a fund to assist and address the needs of honorably discharged indigent veterans and their families who qualify. Programs must at least be partially funded by the Veterans' Assistance Fund established in the county through a tax levy. The county legislative authority may authorize other entities to administer a veterans' assistance program or programs through grants, contracts, or inter-local agreements.

The legislative authority for each county must establish a Veteran's Advisory Board (Board), and must consult with and solicit recommendations from the Board. The Board is responsible for advising on local indigent veterans' needs, available resources, and beneficial programs. Veterans' assistance programs include: financial assistance; employment services; both long-term and short-term transitional housing; mental health counseling; trauma services; and the veterans' incarcerated project.

Summary of Bill: Current National Guard and Armed Force Reserves who have been deployed for active duty may now be eligible for services offered through the veterans assistance programs.

Appropriation: None.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Substitute Bill: PRO: When veterans deployed the first time around, they and their families were in need of assistance but they could not receive it since they were not discharged from the military. This bill fixes that problem. Approximately 53 percent of those serving in Iraq are from the National Guard. National Guard members are no longer considered "weekend warriors" they are warriors. As such, National Guard members experience the same problems such as, committing suicide and homelessness. This bill will help National Guard members who are deployed in federal active duty under Title 10.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Rolfes, prime sponsor; Leif Bentsen, Kitsap County Veterans Assistance; Skip Dreps, Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America.